

## VERBAL AND NONVERBAL CUES TO DECEPTION IN MODERN ENGLISH DISCOURSE

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У статті проаналізовано вербальні та невербальні сигнали обману в сучасній англійській мові. Основну увагу приділено їх взаємодії в дискурсі. З'ясовано, що слухач визначає ступінь достовірності повідомлення мовця, ураховуючи не тільки вербальний канал, але й супутні екстралінгвальні параметри комунікативної ситуації. Дослідження виявило прагматичне навантаження різних форм дієслів, модальних слів, модальних дієслів та займенників, що підтримуються відповідними особистісними характеристиками комунікантів, жестами, мімікою та іншими сигналами мови тіла при виявленні обману.

*Ключові слова:* дискурс, недостовірність, констатив, обман, мовні маркери, невербальні сигнали, мова тіла.

The article analyses the verbal and nonverbal clues of deception in Modern English. The special accent is laid upon the intercourse of these signals in discourse. It was proved that the hearer determines the degree of credibility of the speaker's message, proceeding not only from the verbal channel but also from concomitant extralingual parameters of the communicative situation. The research singled out the pragmatic charge of different tense forms of verbs, pronouns supported by the appropriate personal characteristics of speakers, their gestures, facial expressions and other tips of body language in the process of detecting a lie.

*Key words:* discourse, unreliability, the constative, deception, verbal markers, nonverbal cues, body language.

Any discourse is created with the help of linguistic expressions which reflect a certain person's speech activity. The support of the situation and interlocutors' parameters to the verbal manifestation within the communication process is also of fundamental importance. Taking the significance of both verbal and nonverbal arguments of communication, discourse can be defined as a coherent text framed up with relevant extralingual factors, such as social and cultural, psychological etc. aimed at a certain social influence realized in interaction through cognitive processes [9, p. 233]. The presented understanding of the phenomenon by I. P. Susov is displayed also by the American linguist T. van Dijk considering discourse as a representation of a complicated communicative phenomenon, event which includes social context, information about interlocutors, knowledge of the processes of production and comprehension of verbal texts [6]. Thus, statements in discourse show not only the facts of the objective reality but also reflect some subjective parameters of the conversation such as the speaker's inner emotional experience towards the utterance pronounced: certitude, doubt etc. and his intentions, for instance, to be honest or, on the contrary, to tell a lie.

Depending on the epistemic state and the intentions of the speaker at the moment of speaking the statement can be formed like assertion or supposition about the existence of the reported fact and, thus, contain some clues to its reliability. If the message is marked by the signs of assertive nature, the utterance gains more value in terms of its reliability. In case the speaker is unsure of the verity of the information, the utterance obtains the form of supposition and depicts the subjective opinion, which is believable and not probable and as a result can be false and deceitful.

In everyday communication people deceive very often. Sometimes it is a harmless deception and sometimes lies become uncontrolled and the individuals in question become pathological liars. People can lie by omission, when they want to exaggerate, for self-protection or merely for gossiping. If the speaker deceives, he presents a very different subjective reality, not a true one. Moreover, deception hurts relationships or even destroys them. Even lies told in the name of protecting others

can leave the hearer feeling pretty bad. Deception causes the hearer's frustration and signals about the speaker's disrespect to him. Nowadays it seems a great problem for people to tell the truth. It's sometimes more common for speakers to say only the parts of the truth, leaving the full truth hidden away.

The study of deception is mostly concerned with cognitive mechanisms of its producing [7], with its idiomatic realization [10] as well as with its philosophical [4] and psychological [11] background. But it is important to help the hearer to determine if he / she is dealing with someone who produces a lie.

**The aim of the article** is to eliminate basic subjectively biased verbal and nonverbal items which can signal the hearer about the deception code. *The first*, i.e. **language means**, chosen by the speaker for the evaluation of his / her utterance according to the parameter of credibility are defined as markers of reliability [5, p. 6]. These signs in coordination with concomitant factors to be introduced later can help the hearer to reveal the truth in case intended to be hidden by the speaker. The markers of credibility can be used in different types of utterances. But among all speech acts only the constative one (in terms of G. G. Pocheptsov [8, p. 16]) is considered to be relevant, comprehensible, true and informative. Linguistic means expressing reliability perform an additional evaluative function but in the communicative situation they are not of minor importance, because they transfer the degree of reliability of the statement from the speaker's point of view. *To the second*, e. i. **extralingual factors**, chiefly belong: a) individual and social characteristics of speakers; b) their nonverbal behaviour and c) circumstances of communication. In other words, contextual variety of linguistic means expressing reliability depends on other extralingual factors: age, status, reputation, psychological state, nonverbal behaviour of the speaker. By the way, the cultural footing to the concept of deception may be a perspective for further investigation.

The hearer determines the high degree of credibility of the given information, primarily, due to the markers of credibility pointing to: 1) the information source, 2) evidence, 3) assurance, 4) verity etc. The major criteria to qualify the constative as noncredible are: 1) uncertainty, 2) indefiniteness or lack of the source of information, 3) supposition 4) lack of evidence. In case the constative is suppositional the hearer recognizes it to be of low credibility value, e. i. misrepresenting the reality.

The main linguistic oppositions which reflect the modality of the constative are: 1) objectivity / subjectivity and 2) categoricity / noncategoricity. The opposition of objectivity / subjectivity is the result of comparison of objectively and subjectively oriented information presentation ways. Objectively oriented are such utterances which are marked by linguistic units and imparted with the features of facts:

*"What have I got to worry about? This sort of operation made him famous, didn't it? If he can't make me see again, who can?"*

*"That's right," said the nurse. "What you say is true" (TG, 114).*

The basis of the counterdistinction of categoricity / noncategoricity is formed by contrasting the speaker's confidence and hesitation in the verity of the utterance. Compare the examples:

*"How did you know Tho's was genuine?"*

*"Because I've known Tho for years. He's one of my sources. Very reliable" (TG, 194–195);*

*"He seems to be in hiding."*

*"Then you're saying you have nothing concrete" (TG, 162).*

Modal meanings of reliability can be expressed by different modal expressions. Modal verbs *must, should, ought, can, could, may, might*, for instance, can express different shades of supposition in representing the objective reality. Let us present some of them.

The modal verb **must**, for instance, is used to express logical inference usually based on facts:

*"But what's it for?" I asked. "It must have been made for a reason" (TG, 67).*

The modal verb **may**, on the contrary, functions in the meaning of supposition of the possible action and presents the information in credibility of which the speaker is not sure:

“Apparently there is a risk that the child may even lose her leg” (TG, 128).

In addition to modal verbs there are also modal words which represent modality of truth or lie. Due to their meaning modal words can be:

1. Assertive, expressing certainty of the speaker in the true nature of the message (categorical credibility) such as *certainly, surely, no doubt, really* etc.:

“Of course,” he added pensively, “the years aren’t too kind to anyone, life takes its toll” (TG, 43).

2. Suppositional, displaying possibility (problematic credibility) like *perhaps, maybe* etc.:

“Yes, but maybe they won’t always be bringing you in” (TABCM, 97).

3. Commentary, presenting the speaker’s subjective evaluation of the contents of the utterance from the point of view of desirability or undesirability: *un/fortunately, un/luckily, un/happily*:

He counted the money. It amounted to a satisfactory ninety-four dollars, mostly fives and tens, and all used bills which meant they couldn’t be identified. Happily, he added the cash to his own wallet (TM, 125).

The importance of *verbal cues* in constituting the value of the message is indisputable. In the film “Lie to me”, for instance, Cullam accused of stealing some money denies her being guilty though verbal expressions in her speaking style reveals quite the contrary and her speech contains indicators of the guilty consciousness:

“What the hell do you want from this? [...] no one will believe him. It’s worthless to explain to people. They want to crucify him. They called him the Hitler of Wall Street. They hate him” (LTM, 19:10–19:20).

It can be clearly seen that Cullam uses *negative emotions words* nearly in each statement. This signals that she is lying. One more cue of deception is provided by Mr. Hollain, her father, who being interviewed changes the verb tenses and keeps shifting from past to present and back again (*I am not stealing / I didn’t steal*) (LTM, 13:50-14:27).

By manipulating verb tenses, most people get away with lying. If being asked “Have you bought a car?” the speaker responds by “I am not buying a car”, did he answer the question? The speaker simply stated that he currently does not buy a car. But he may have bought it in the past or may have bought it last week. It depends on the grammatical time expression time, not the answer to the question.

While speakers go out of their way to avoid lying, they also elude the questions posed. They tell what they saw or what they did, but never anything entrapping. “I wouldn’t do that” is not the same as “I didn’t do that!” So, in accordance with the maxim of quality, being asked a direct question, the speaker must present the valuable information, but the speakers often flout this principle:

“This is the question that everybody wants to know – Did you do it?”

“The only way we can really answer that is that we are going to plead not guilty” (TABCM, 92).

There are numerous examples of people who have been found guilty of a crime and yet couldn’t claim their innocence when posed with a direct question. If someone answers the question with a question, deception can be found there. It’s up to the hearer to decide on clarification vs. dishonesty on hearing the structure like “What did you say?” or the echo-question, as in the example:

“You were safe enough so long as no one suspected you. Once you were suspected proofs were easy to obtain.”

“Proofs?”

“Yes, I found the stick that you used in the Andover and Churston murders” (TABCM, 149).

One more great way to tell that a story has changed from truth to lies is to examine the pronouns. When a speaker wants to distance himself from something he/she starts using articles instead of possessive pronouns. For example, a speaker may refer to “my car” when he/she wants to take ownership, while referring to it as “the car” he/she distances himself from the object presented.

Sometimes the markers of reliability with high degree value can play a trick onto the hearer. It can be so if not taking into account the personal features of the speakers who can be in this case the liar

and the manipulator. The best way to detect lies from the best liars is to look for unnecessary words. If a speaker starts a sentence with “*to tell the truth*”, “*to be honest*” etc. and there is no correspondence to his/her nonverbal markers of truth, a lie can follow.

In today’s situation of excessive electronic communication, nevertheless, the emphasis we place on words has never been higher. Because of this, the amount of misinformation spread across the world is high due to the increasing value speakers place upon the transmitted words in order to deliver their thoughts. If the only constituent of transmitted information to rely on was the content itself, it would make it extremely difficult to ascertain its reliability.

Only the balance of both verbal and nonverbal signals eliminates the original nature of discourse [3, p. 50]. In some cases, though, the nonverbal reaction can be far more valid than words. Movements and gestures as elements of body language can easier deliver information about the emotional state of interlocutors not being sometimes clearly seen from the lingual part:

*“Good-bye!” said June. “Shake hands!” Soames put his hand in one which gave it a convulsive squeeze then dropped it like a cold potato* (TFS, 47).

In this example the character has not said anything concerning his/her attitude towards the person he/she has been speaking to, but his/her reaction shows disgust and unwillingness to communicate – *“he dropped his hand like a cold potato.*

The markers of reliability can be supported in discourse by *personal characteristics* of the speaker: 1) physical (age, gender, mental/physical health); 2) social (status, profession,); 3) psychological (temperament, emotional state); 4) individual (moral values, cultural level, ethical principles) [5, p. 16]. Consider the example below to analyse the significance of the speaker’s personal details:

*Johnny paused in the hall. “What do you want?” he asked in a dejected voice. He didn’t bother to turn around.*

*“Is there any coffee?”*

*“Retta drank it all,” he said in a hard, accusing voice.*

*“Well, would you make some more?”*

*There was a long pause. “I guess,” he said. Shoulders sagging, he went into the kitchen* (TNS, 38).

The signs of nonverbal behaviour of the speaker point distinctly to his/her psychological state (*he spoke in a dejected, hard and accusing voice*) and cultural level (*he didn’t turn around*) revealing his neglect and discontent, which can prompt to the speaker’s personal features determining his speech conduct. *Personal characteristics* determine the degree of trust to the utterance of the speaker and together with other extralingual factors escalate arguments for the hearer so as to help him to interpret the possible implicit meaning of the speaker’s utterance.

In general, communication is better portrayed through nonverbal communication than by means of words. Although this may seem an exaggerated statement, it is a discovery promoted by multiple scientific findings. Scientists A. Mehrabian, M. Knapp and R. Birdwhistell state in a normal conversation the verbal channel provides the hearer only with 35 % of information, while 65 % are demonstrated nonverbally [1, p. 119]. It is suggested then that people speak with their bodies a lot more than they suppose. Contrary to universal belief, body language is far more than just a facial expression or an increased blink rate.

Body language is actions covering too many items. Now it becomes even possible to rely only on the signs of nonverbal behaviour without the analysis of the speaker’s words in order to conclude how reliable his/her statement is or what state (psychological or emotional) he/she is in. It is so because by body language speakers display unintentionally signals our conscious brain isn’t aware of [11, p. 264]. This isn’t though always true. Speakers can also send intentional body language signals. Arching an eyebrow, waving hello or jumping for joy – these are all examples of body language, but ones we’re fully aware of. All of these conducts represent communication without the use of words. Uncontrolled body language of the speaker is one of such tips which allow the hearer a glimpse of

the truth. While it is by no means a concrete certitude, body language serves as an additional aspect of information speakers can use to ascertain persons' identity through the awareness of their subconscious actions.

The question often arises as to why humans strive to conceal their lie and fail to do it. The answer comes down to a contradiction between two separate parts of the brain. When a person is aware they're lying, a cognitive conflict arises which manifests itself as discrepancy between verbal and nonverbal conducts. The speaker under inspection may turn left after being accused of a crime, but his/her hands may signal to the right. The speaker lying might also cover his/her mouth presenting significant pieces of information, while not when revealing some unimportant details [2]. It is these unconscious signals which should interest communicants when attempting to discover a lie. Among the basic nonverbal cues to unreliability and deception are: 1) hand gestures, 2) eye movements and 3) body language, the combination of which is shown in the example:

*"[...] the robe we found. Blue terry cloth. A woman's robe."*

*She visibly started. "I don't know what you're talking about."*

*"No?" I leaned back, watching, waiting. She wouldn't look at me. But I could see the cracks in her armor slowly appear. A tongue ran over her lips. She swallowed more often. Then an occasional furtive sideways glance. She wanted me to say something.*

*But I just kept looking at her. "Damn you." She turned to me. "Damn you, Colonel."*

*"It was your robe, then?"*

*A nod (TG, 236).*

There are many *hand gestures* that exhibit that a speaker is either dishonest or in distress. Most of these gestures are caused by natural chemical reactions in the body. To uncover a liar it is important to watch for gestures the speaker makes towards his/her face. Other signals to discover deception based just on hand and arm movements are: 1) *arms crossed* (dishonesty, distress or disagreement), 2) *hands on hips* (restrain or anger), 3) *hands clenched* (dishonesty or distress), 4) *hands in pockets* (dishonesty, distress, or disagreement), 5) *palm displays* (honesty), 6) *excessive palm displays* (good liar, watch out), 7) *placing a box or tea between two people communicating* (dishonesty, distress or disagreement), 8) *rubbing the neck* (dishonesty, distress, or disagreement), 9) *hand lightly on chin* (interest and honest). For instance, Bill Clinton, famously touched his nose 88 times, when he was being questioned during his Lewinsky testimony [2].

The hearer can learn a lot about the speaker by studying *eye movements*, as in the example:

*"I watched her real close when the tape was played tonight back at the condo. She acted upset. Like she was real worried. Almost had me convinced. Except for the eyes. They were cold... hard." He turned to me. "Eyes don't lie, sir." [...] The trembling lip, the sagging shoulders, the furtive gestures. A picture of worry and grief except for her eyes. Jonesy was right (TG, 261).*

People are biased to look in certain directions, depending on what they are thinking about. This information is based off of numerous research studies in such a branch of psychology known as Neurolinguistic Programming. This is what person's *eyes look* direction signal when thinking: 1) *up and to the right*: thinking about something that happened visually; 2) *sideways and to the right*: thinking about something they heard; 3) *down and to the right*: talking to themselves; 4) *up and to the left*: constructing or thinking up a lie visually; 5) *sideways and to the left*: constructing or thinking up a lie orally; 6) *down and to the left*: thinking about something they did; 7) *straight ahead with a haze*: thinking of something that happened visually. There are a few more tips to discover if someone is lying or in distress, by watching the eyes. When two people meet for the first time, the first person to look away is submissive to the other. The speakers, who often lie, sustain uncomfortable eye contact. Liars look you in the partner's eyes for 70 % or more of the conversation. 50 % eye contact is considered normal. Finally, a person's blink rate abruptly increases during long periods of lying [2].

Faltering the feet is also a great sign of dishonesty or distress. It is hard for people to take control over their *leg movements* unless they are paying attention to them exactly. It has been proved that feet can point toward direction they want to follow. If during someone's report everyone's feet point towards the door, it's time to end up the speech or switch the topic. The final body language gesture clue to a lie or distress is *facial flushing*.

Lying is very trying for a speaker. When a speaker is going through long periods of lying, he/she starts *acting* very oddly: cracks in her armor, having trouble swallowing, as in the previous examples, as well as moving in a very mechanical way rather than natural or getting pompous, as in the example:

*"Honestly, Lucie, much better if you don't know. I mean, I have a lot of irons in the fire, you know that, this is just one came to a head at an entirely fortunate moment."*

*"He was lying, she knew. He always got pompous, rhetorically defensive when he was lying. But she also knew it was useless to press him if he was determined, so she gave up"* (ТРО, 62).

So, if speakers' physical gestures don't match with their words, hearers trust the body language cues while catching liars. The basic rule for uncovering deception and discovering the truth is to pay attention to both verbal and nonverbal clues and to their intercourse in discourse.

Hence, the reliable character of discourse is determined by an integral efficiency of, on the one hand, linguistic components embodied in the text and, on the other hand, a string of nonverbal details, conceived from the context and situation functioning in the real time. The success of a particular communication strategy depends on a lot of factors the awareness of which supplies the speakers with the information how to read the message transmitted and to make the process of detecting a lie easier.

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